

California state stem cell agency enters historic agreement to foster collaboration between California researchers and National Institutes of Health investigators

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October 26, 2011, San Francisco, Calif. — The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is entering agreements to foster collaborative funding of research with outside funding agencies. One such agreement is with the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM), the state stem cell agency created by Proposition 71.

The memorandum of understanding signed by CIRM President Alan Trounson and Michael Gottesman, Deputy Director for Intramural Research at NIH, is a pilot project of these partnerships in clinical and translational research. This MOU establishes a framework to advance the complementary and synergistic goals of CIRM and the NIH to "help NIH and CIRM researchers work together to bring their special talents in stem cell and regenerative medicine research to bear upon prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of various diseases."

The NIH, through its trans-NIH Center for Regenerative Medicine (NIH CRM), the NIH Clinical Center, and the newly established NIH Center for Translational Therapeutics (NCTT), will foster these interactions. The NIH Clinical Center is the world's largest hospital dedicated entirely to clinical research. The Center houses basic, translational and clinical research efforts of the NIH intramural research community, including the recently established NIH CRM funded through the NIH Common Fund.

The NIH CRM was created to serve as a resource for the scientific community, providing stem cells and supporting protocols and standard operating procedures used to derive, culture, and differentiate the stem cells into different cell types. The NCTT, established in the National Human Genome Research Institute, will employ large scale screening methods using stem cells and their derivatives to identify small molecules based therapies.

"Our mission is to accelerate the progress of stem cell science to clinical products for patients, and this partnership with NIH has the potential for significant acceleration of the field," said CIRM's Trounson.

"The goal is to use this agreement as a springboard to create synergy between our funding streams and expand the capacity of each agency to move advances in basic research more rapidly into the clinic," said Mahendra Rao, Director of the NIH Center for Regenerative Medicine.

CIRM and NIH are working to establish opportunities for collaboration. One relates to the current round of applications for CIRM's Disease Team Therapy Development Research awards. During the planning phase of these awards, California teams could develop collaborations with researchers at the NIH Clinical Center on various aspects of a preclinical, Phase I, Phase I/II or Phase II clinical trial. Another option is to enable California researchers with the opportunity to take part in NIH Clinical Center visiting fellowship or clinical investigator training programs. A third is to access unique resources they could apply to use that may not be available at their home institution.

In addition to the translational and clinical projects, the two groups are exploring ways for CIRM and NIH scientists to collaborate in earlier translational or basic biology projects.

About CIRM: CIRM was established in November 2004 with the passage of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Act. The statewide ballot measure, which provided \$3 billion in funding for stem cell research at California universities and research institutions, was overwhelmingly approved by voters, and called for the establishment of an entity to make grants and provide loans for stem cell research, research facilities, and other vital research opportunities. A list of grants and loans awarded to date may be seen here: <http://www.cirm.ca.gov/for-researchers/researchfunding>.

The NIH Common Fund encourages collaboration and supports a series of exceptionally high impact, trans-NIH programs. Programs funded through the Common Fund are managed by the NIH Office of the Director's Office of Strategic Coordination in partnership with the various NIH Institutes, Centers and Offices. Common Fund programs are designed to pursue major opportunities and gaps in biomedical research that the agency as a whole should address to make the biggest impact possible on the progress of medical

research. Additional information about the NIH Common Fund can be found at <http://commonfund.nih.gov>.

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